

# THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Lyric Opera San Diego Breaks Ground On North Park Theatre Renovations

### Revitalized Theater Set To Reopen For Live Performances In Late 2005

SAN DIEGO -- In a historic moment for North Park, Lyric Opera San Diego broke ground Friday, May 21st, on its renovation project that will re-open the North Park Theatre as a live-performance venue and restore it to its original beauty.

Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins and Assemblymember Christine Kehoe were joined by project developer Bud Fischer, City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency Director Hank Cunningham, Lyric Opera San Diego general director Leon Natker, and major theater donors Dr. Merle and Mrs. Teresa Fischlowitz for the ceremonial ground breaking, which drew in excess of 70 community members and Lyric Opera supporters.

With the seismic retrofit of the theater completed, the City of San Diego will, within the next two weeks, officially convey the theater to the Lyric Opera.

"Today's ceremony represents the fulfillment of the city's promise to this community. It also represents the fulfillment of my promise to make the revitalization of this theater one of my top 10 priorities," said Deputy Mayor Atkins. "We've protected this theater from demolition all these years, and we are now prepared to convey it into the hands of an organization that will restore it to its former glory, and carry it to new heights as a quality live theater venue for not only this community, but the greater San Diego region."

Since purchasing the building in 1990 to ensure preservation of this historic landmark, the City of San Diego has committed significant financial and technical assistance toward the redevelopment of the theater. The city's Redevelopment Agency, through the Community and Economic Development Department, will pay for approximately 80 percent of the entire redevelopment project, which includes renovation of the theatre, the development of a 393-space parking garage and a 75-space surface parking lot. This \$20 million investment of city Redevelopment Agency funds represents an investment in a project that will serve as a catalyst for future redevelopment and revitalization efforts in North Park.

"The Redevelopment Project in North Park was initiated with this theater's preservation and restoration as one of its primary goals. With this project, we are seeing the fulfillment of this promise," said Atkins. "More than that, the promise of this theater has spurred a continuing stream of private investment and redevelopment activity throughout North Park."

The theater, which sits at the corner of 29th Street and University Avenue, has sat dormant for almost two decades. It is scheduled to re-open in late 2005 with the Lyric Opera's performance of "Cinderella."

"In less than year and a half, when the Stephen and Mary Birch North Park Theatre opens for its first live performance in almost two decades, it is Lyric Opera San Diego who will be receiving a much-deserved standing ovation," Atkins said. "I look forward to that day as a fulfillment of our commitment to North Park to bring this theater back to life."

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